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JEFFERSONIAN PRINCIPLES.

BY WILLIAM J. BRYAN.

THE admirers of Thomas Jefferson have reason to be gratified at the growing interest felt in the principles enunciated by him. During the early days of the Republic, Jefferson and Hamilton represented two opposite schools of political thought. Jefferson believed in the doctrines set forth in the Declaration of Independence; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men; and that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. **He** believed that the people could be trusted to govern themselves: **not** that they would govern themselves perfectly, but that they would govern themselves better than any hereditary ruler could govern them. His faith in popular government was tersely expressed in a letter to John Tyler: "Believing, as I do, that the mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights, and especially that the evils flowing from the duperies of the people are less injurious than those from the egoism of their agents, I am a friend of that composition of government which has in it the most of this ingredient."

The closing days of Jefferson's life were brightened by the contemplation of the progress already made, and by an unshaken confidence in the future of the nation which he had helped to found. Ten days before his death, in a letter expressing his regret that illness prevented his participation in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, he said: "All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind had not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a

avored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them."

Hamilton, on the other hand, doubted the capacity of the people for self government, and his distrust of the masses lured him to the fatal field where he died at the hand of Aaron Burr. In a statement giving his objections to duelling and his reason for accepting the challenge, he said: "The ability to be in the future useful, whether in resisting mischief or effecting good in the crises of our public affairs which seem likely to happen, would probably be inseparable from a conformity with public prejudices in this particular."

Senator Lodge discusses this question in his life of Hamilton, and says: "Hamilton believed the Constitution to be unequal to the burden imposed upon it. And he considered the government too weak. At any moment, as it seemed to him, there might be a general upheaval, and that then the elements which had desolated France and swept over Europe, might here engage in a conflict for supremacy." Mr. Lodge adds: "He was utterly at fault in supposing that there was in the United States the same elements and the same forces as in France. Both race and history made their existence impossible. The representative democracy developing in America was more hostile to the anarchy of the French Revolution than the strongest and most energetic government which the wit of man could devise. Hamilton's mistake was neither unnatural nor uncommon; but, joined with his just belief of the duty which would devolve upon him in such a crisis as he anticipated, it made it imperative for him to accept the challenge of Burr."

When the Republican party was organized, it did not conjure with the name of Hamilton, but in its platform of 1856 appealed to those who were in favor of "restoring the action of the federal government to the principles of Washington and Jefferson."

Lincoln paid a high tribute to Jefferson in 1859. I quote from a letter of that date: "All honor to Jefferson; to a man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document an abstract truth,

applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there that, today and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling block to the harbingers of reappearing tyranny and oppression."

During recent years organized wealth has taken advantage of the lethargy of the people, and "the effort to place capital on an equal footing with, if not above, labor in the structure of government" (as predicted by Lincoln) is becoming more and more apparent. The poison in the blood has manifested itself first in one form and then in another, until at last the people are awakening to a realization of the fact that the government has drifted from the ideals of the founders, and, with the awakening, comes the appeal to all who are in favor of restoring the federal government to the principles of the fathers.

The ship of state may be intrusted to other pilots during fair weather; but, in the hours of storm, the people turn to the Sage of Monticello, the greatest of the world's constructive statesmen.

Born an aristocrat, he became the first conspicuous Democrat; reared among the owners of landed estates, he led a successful crusade against the laws of primogeniture and entail; rich, for the time in which he lived, he championed the cause of the common people.

He had faith in the patriotism of his fellow men; and yet he was conscious of the frailties of human nature, and his scheme of government was intended to strengthen the public servant to resist temptation, while it protected the people against a betrayal of the trust reposed in their representatives.

"Equal rights to all and special privileges to none," was the rule which he applied to all legislation. And how comprehensive the rule !

Applied to appropriations, it would limit expenditures to the needs of an efficient government, economically administered; and it would protect the overburdened tax payer from the voracious tax eater.

Applied to taxation, it would adjust the burdens of government in proportion to the benefits received. It would not permit the federal government to rely entirely upon internal revenue taxes, collected from liquor and tobacco, and upon import duties collected upon consumption generally, because the taxes collected by both these methods are, in effect, graded income taxes, with the highest rate upon the smallest incomes.

This rule would not permit the establishment of a financial system designed to effect a secret but constant increase in the measure of value, for the benefit of the holders of fixed investments and to the detriment of those who produce wealth, own property, or owe debts.

Jefferson's action in suspending the coinage of silver dollars has been frequently referred to, as an evidence of hostility to silver. The order was made, at the suggestion of the bankers, because of the scarcity of small coin; but it did not interfere with the free and unlimited coinage of silver into half dollars, quarters and dimes, all of which were at that time full legal tender equal with gold. So long as gold is given unlimited coinage into full legal tender money of some denomination, it is immaterial whether the government coins one dollar pieces or three dollar pieces, or confines the coinage to higher denominations; and so, while silver can be coined, without charge and without limit, into full legal tender money of some denomination, it matters not whether it is coined into dollars, half dollars or smaller denominations. The test of bimetallism is not found in the coinage of money of any particular denomination, but in the coinage of both metals, without limitation, into full legal tender money at a fixed ratio.

Jefferson is also quoted in support of the commercial ratio, as against the present coinage ratio; but those who thus quote him ignore the very important fact that, when he recommended the adoption of the commercial ratio, it was at a time when all the gold and silver produced from the mines could find access to government mints, and when the commercial ratio was the resultant of the different coinage ratio acting upon the metals. For the United States to have established a ratio appreciably different from those then existing, would have added a new and disturbing factor. At the present time, gold has access to so many mints, and silver has access to so few mints, that the commercial ratio indicates only the value of the surplus silver which is excluded from the mints, and must seek a mercantile use. So long as the coined silver of the world circulates at the ratio of fifteen to one, as it does in some countries, or at fifteen and a half to one, as it does in other countries, or at sixteen to one, as it does in this country, the United States can, by the restoration of free and unlimited coinage, lift the commercial ratio up to the legal ratio. If we had free and unlimited coinage at sixteen to one, the opening of Eu-

ropean mints at fifteen and a half to one would raise our silver to a premium; but until some strong nation resumes free coinage at such a ratio, we can maintain the parity at sixteen to one.

The rule above referred to would prohibit special contracts intended to nullify the legal tender laws of the nation. Comparatively few can avail themselves of the advantage of special contracts, and when a few protect themselves from possible fluctuations in one kind of money, they add to the risk which must be borne by those who are not in a position to make such contracts. Gold contracts create a new demand for gold, and tend to destroy the parity which the government attempts to maintain. No believer in the Jeffersonian doctrine of "equality before the law" can defend the special contract, which not only raises one class of individuals above the law, but tends to thwart the very purpose of the law.

The rule would compel the government to exercise the debtor's option in the redemption of coin obligations, when necessary for the protection of the public against the selfish schemes of those who would deplete the treasury, for the purpose of forcing an issue of bonds or in order to discredit government paper. The debtor's option is necessary to the maintenance of the double standard. If creditors had the right to choose the coin of payment, the demand would fall exclusively upon the dearer metal, and thus increase its price. When the debtor has the option, the demand falls upon the cheaper metal, and, when the demand is sufficient, raises the price of that metal up to the coinage ratio.

The Jeffersonian rule would prohibit the establishment of national banks of issue, because a bank of issue not only exercises a potent and dangerous control over the property of others, but it enjoys a privilege denied to others. It was the issue of paper money by banks that led Jefferson to declare that banks of issue are more dangerous than standing armies. That the bank is wearing the coat of many colors, indicative of parental partiality, is known to the most casual observer. One of the bills which has received the indorsement of the House committee, provides for the gradual retirement of the greenbacks, and for the issue of two and one-half per cent. gold bonds when necessary to maintain the gold reserve. Thus bonds drawing interest are to be substituted for greenbacks drawing no interest, and the taxpayers are to work a little harder to meet increased taxation. On the other hand, the national

bank, which is now permitted to issue notes up to ninety per cent. of the face of the bonds deposited, is to be authorized to issue up to par, while the tax of one per cent. upon the circulation is to be reduced to a small fraction of one per cent. The people at large, who enjoy no special advantages, find their taxes increasing; while the banks, which are enjoying special privileges, find their taxes decreasing. If a laborer, a farmer, a merchant or a professional man, saves enough money to buy a government bond, he loses the use of the money invested in the bond and must content himself with the interest paid upon the bond; but a national bank will, under the proposed law, be able to invest its capital in bonds and then, by depositing the bonds, secure bank notes to the par value of the bonds, thus securing a return of its investment while it continues to draw interest upon the bonds. The ordinary individual can eat his cake or keep it; the national bank can both eat its cake and keep it.

According to Jefferson's philosophy, the government must not only avoid injustice in its dealings with the people, but it must prevent injustice as between man and man. The citizen has an inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and it is the duty of the government to make this right secure, in fact this is declared to be the very object of government.

Jeffersonian principles, applied to present industrial conditions, would annihilate the trusts. A monopoly which controls the product of a necessary of life has society at its mercy. To authorize, or permit, the establishment of such a monopoly is equivalent to surrendering the taxing power to private individuals, to be used for personal gain.

That those who are industrially weak should be protected from injury at the hands of those who are industrially strong, is as imperatively necessary as that the physically weak should be protected from the physically strong. Since all corporate privileges are bestowed by law they can be withdrawn by law; the power of the government is, therefore, sufficient to compel the corporation to remember its creator, not only in the days of its youth, but throughout its entire existence.

Freedom of contract is impossible except between those who stand upon practically the same level. Where one party is weak and dependent, and the other strong and aggressive, freedom of contract may degenerate into freedom to coerce. The demand

for arbitration of disputes between capital and labor grows out of the disparity between the large corporate employer and the employee, and this demand is consistent with the Jeffersonian doctrine that governments are instituted to secure to the individual his inherent and inalienable rights.

Jefferson was a firm believer in trial by jury. In a letter written in 1789, he defends the jury system, pointing out that it is a protection against the possible bias of the judge, and says: "Were I called upon to decide, whether the people had best be omitted in the legislative or judiciary department, I would say it is better to leave them out of the legislative. The execution of the laws is more important than the making of them. However, it is best to have the people in all three departments, where that is possible." Government by injunction, which is a poorly disguised attempt to deny a jury trial to those accused of crime, is a violation of the principles taught by Jefferson.

In view of the recent demand for a large increase in the permanent army, it may not be out of place to refer to Jefferson's position on this subject. In his first inaugural address he included among the things advocated by him, "a well disciplined militia, our best reliance in peace and for the first moments of war till regulars may relieve them," and "the supremacy of the civil over the military authority." In his first message to Congress, in December, 1801, he emphasized his partiality for the militia system in preference to a large regular army, and in referring to the nation's defence said: "Nor is it conceived needful nor safe that a standing army should be kept up in time of peace for that purpose." He recognized the menace of a great military establishment, and believed that a republic should rely for its defence upon its citizen soldiery.

I shall not attempt to apply the principles of Jefferson to all the questions now under discussion. Enough has already been said to show how fundamental those principles are in their character.

But, in considering the policy to be pursued by the United States in dealing with the Filipinos, we are entering upon a field so new to our people that we have especial need to turn to the past for wisdom and admonition. Jefferson's writings cover every phase of the question.

Is the doctrine of conquest an American doctrine? In a letter

written to Mr. Short, in 1791, Jefferson said: "If there be one principle more deeply written than any other in the mind of every American, it is that we should have nothing to do with conquest."

His ambition for territory was limited to the North American continent. He favored the annexation of Cuba, "when solicited by herself," and insisted that no territory should be accepted which required a navy to defend it. He expressly disclaimed any desire to have our national sovereignty extended farther south than Cuba. He was devoted to the doctrine that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed; and no proposition could be more antagonistic to his teachings than that an alien race should be subjugated by force of arms, taxed without representation, and governed without their consent.

In the "Summary View of the Rights of British America," written by him in 1774, he said:

"Not only the principles of common sense, but the common feelings of human nature, must be surrendered up, before His Majesty's subjects here can be persuaded to believe, that they hold their political existence at the will of a British parliament. Shall these governments be dissolved, their property annihilated, and their people reduced to a state of nature, at the imperious breath of a body of men whom they never saw, in whom they never confided, and over whom they have no powers of punishment or removal, let their crimes against the American public be ever so great? Can any one reason be assigned, why one hundred and sixty thousand electors in the island of Great Britain, should give law to four millions in the States of America, every individual of whom is equal to every individual of them in virtue, in understanding, and in bodily strength? Were this to be admitted, instead of being a free people, as we have hitherto supposed, and mean to continue ourselves, we would suddenly be found the slaves, not of one, but of one hundred and sixty thousand tyrants; distinguished, too, from all others, by this singular circumstance, that they are removed from the reach of fear, the only restraining motive which may hold the hand of a tyrant."

In the same paper he said: "Still less let it be proposed, that our properties, within our own territories, shall be taxed or regulated by any power on earth, but our own. The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time: the hand of force may destroy, but cannot disjoin them."

Jefferson mentioned, incidentally, that the Americans were the equals of the English in virtue, understanding and bodily strength, but, if any one thinks that the rights of the colonists arose from the fact that they were the equals of the inhabitants of

the mother country, let him read Lincoln's analysis of the Declaration of Independence. In a speech delivered at Beardstown, Ill., August 12, 1858, he said:

"They (the Fathers of the Republic) erected a beacon to guide their children and their children's children, and the countless myriads who should inhabit the earth in other ages. Wise statesmen as they were, they knew the tendency of prosperity to breed tyrants, and so they established these great self-evident truths, that when in the distant future, some man, some faction, some interest, should set up the doctrine that none but rich men, none but white men, or none but Anglo-Saxon white men, were entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, their posterity might look up again to the Declaration of Independence, and take courage to renew the battle which their fathers began, so that truth and justice and mercy, and all the humane and Christian virtues, might not be extinguished from the land; so that no man would hereafter dare to limit and circumscribe the great principles upon which the temple of liberty was being built."

I cannot refrain from adding Lincoln's appeal:

"Now, my countrymen, if you have been taught doctrines conflicting with the great landmarks of the Declaration of Independence; if you have listened to suggestions which would take away from its grandeur and mutilate the fair symmetry of its proportions; if you have been inclined to believe that all men are not created equal in those inalienable rights enumerated by our chart of liberty; let me entreat you to come back. Return to the fountain whose waters spring close by the blood of the Revolution. Think nothing of me; take no thought of the political fate of any man whomsoever, but come back to the truths that are in the Declaration of Independence. You may do anything with me you choose, if you will but heed these sacred principles."

Jefferson was a student both of history and of human nature; he knew the strength of race attachments and race prejudices, and he was profoundly impressed with the danger of race antagonism, even in the United States. If we could lay aside all questions of right, can we ignore the certain complications which would arise from an attempt to make subjects of the Filipinos and enforce the authority of a relatively small number of white rulers?

The renaissance of Jeffersonian principles is at hand.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN.